

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY
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AMEMBASSY LA PAZ PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L MONTEVIDEO 5688

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, MILI, UY
SUBJ: URUGUAYAN MILITARY TAKE OFFENSE AT
GENERAL MC AULIFFE'S STATEMENT

1. DURING THE COURSE OF 2 DAY VISIT HERE, SOUTHCOM COMMANDER
LT. GEN MC AULIFFE MET WITH TOP CIVILIAN AND MILITARY LEADERS
IN THE GOVERNMENT. A REPORT ON THE ENTIRE VISIT WILL BE SENT
SEPTEL. THIS MESSAGE WILL CONCENTRATE ON THE COMMENTS HE MADE
IN A TOAST AT A LUNCHEON GIVEN IN HIS HONOR BY THE GENERAL
STAFF ON DECEMBER 12, AND THE EVENTS WHICH FOLLOWED.

2. FOLLOWING A TOAST OFFERED BY THE HOST, DEFENSE MINISTER
RAVENNA, GENERAL MC AULIFFE READ THE FOLLOWING
STATEMENT:
QUITE. IT IS A GREAT PLEASURE TO BE WITH YOU ALL IN
MONTEVIDEO. FOR SOME TIME I HAVE AWAITED THIS OPPORTUNITY TO
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VISIT YOU AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ARMED FORCES OF THE
UNITED STATES. DURING THIS VISIT I HOPE TO BETTER KNOW THIS
GREAT COUNTRY AND TO DEMONSTRATE AND EMPHASIZE THE CONTINUING
INTEREST OF THE SOUTHERN COMMAND IN YOUR COUNTRY.

URUGUAY AND THE UNITED STATES HAVE MAINTAINED FOR A LONG TIME
CORDIAL AND PRODUCTIVE MILITARY RELATIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN
BENEFICIAL TO BOTH COUNTRIES. RECENTLY THESE RELATIONS
HAVE BECOME SOMEWHAT RESTRICTED BY DIFFERENCES IN POINTS OF
VIEW CONCERNING THE CURRENT EMPHASIS OF OUR GOVERNMENT ON

HUMAN RIGHTS. I BELIEVE IT WOULD BE BENEFICIAL TO EXPLAIN THE POSITION OF THE AMERICAN MILITARY ON THIS SUBJECT.

IN ADDITION TO OUR LEGAL AND MORAL OBLIGATION TO SUPPORT THE EFFORTS OF OUR GOVERNMENT TO STIMULATE RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, THE MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES OF THE U.S. ALSO SHARE TOTALLY THE SENTIMENTS OF OUR PEOPLE AND OUR CONGRESS ON THIS IMPORTANT SUBJECT. WE BELIEVE THAT THE HUMAN DESIRE FOR LIBERTY IS UNIVERSAL AND IRREPRESSIBLE. THE DEGREE TO WHICH YOUR COUNTRY SUPPORT THIS CAUSE WILL AFFECT THE FUTURE OF OUR MUTUAL AND BENEFICIAL TRADITIONAL MILITARY RELATIONS.

IT WOULD GREATLY HELP IF I WERE ABLE TO COMMUNICATE TO THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF IN WASHINGTON EVIDENCE OF THE ACHIEVEMENTS THAT YOU HAVE REALIZED TO PROTECT INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS.

I WOULD NOW LIKE TO OFFER A TOAST TO THE PROGRESS AND PROSPERITY OF OUR TWO COUNTRIES.
UNQUOTE

3. AS IF BY SIGNAL, THE THREE CINCS AND ALL THE OTHER MILITARY OFFICERS PRESENT LEFT HURRIEDLY WITHOUT TAKING COFFEE.
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FONMIN ROVIRA STAYED AND IN A VISIBLY PERTURBED STATE QUESTIONED GENERAL MC AULIFFE AS TO WHY THE US GOVERNMENT WAS NOT AWARE THAT THERE WERE "NO HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATORS IN URUGUAY". ROVIRA REITERATED THE OLD THEME THAT URUGUAY WAS THE VICTIM OF A CAMPAIGN OF CALUMNY DIRECTED BY THE COMMUNISTS, AND THAT THE FACT THAT THE USG WAS NOT AWARE OF THIS REALITY WAS MOST DISTURBING. MC AULIFFE ANSWERED THAT THE POOR INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION URUGUAY SUFFERED STEMMED FROM ALLEGATIONS OF VIOLATIONS WHICH HAD GONE UNANSWERED BY THE GOU. THE USG WAS NOT THE ONE TO SET THIS RECORD STRAIGHT. SINCE URUGUAY'S REPUTATION IS AT STAKE, IT IS THE GOU'S RESPONSIBILITY TO CLEAR THE RECORD.

4. THAT EVENING I OFFERED A RECEPTION IN HONOR OF GENERAL MC AULIFFE, TO WHICH ALL PRINCIPAL MILITARY LEADERS WERE INVITED. ALL BOYCOTTED THE AFFAIR, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF BRIG. BORAD OF THE AIR FORCE (WHO DID NOT ATTEND THE LUNCHEON), THREE (AIR FORCE PALADINI, AND TWO ARMY GENERALS, HOUNTOU AND PRANTL) SENT OR PHONED REGRETS. THE OTHERS JUST DID NOT SHOW. HOWEVER THE COLONELS AND LOWER LEVEL MILITARY OFFICIALS INVITED DID ATTEND, THOUGH IN FEWER NUMBERS THAN NORMALLY.

WHEN DEFENSE MINISTER RAVENNA ARRIVED I TOOK HIM ASIDE TO INDICATE MY DISPLEASURE AT THE FAILURE OF THE MILITARY LEADERS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS OPPORTUNITY TO CONTINUE THE DIALOGUE WITH MC AULIFFE. RAVENNA ADMITTED OPENLY THAT THE MILITARY OFFICERS FELT INSULTED BY MC AULIFFE'S REMARKS, WHICH HE

CHARACTERIZED AS TANTAMOUNT TO ACCUSING THEM OF "BEING GUILTY OF VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS." I TOLD RAVENNA THAT THEIR BEHAVIOR WAS DEPLORABLE AND THAT NOTHING THE GENERAL HAD SAID IMPLIED ANY SUCH THING. I ADDED IT WAS HARD TO UNDERSTAND HOW THE URUGUAYAN MILITARY EXPECTED TO HAVE ANY MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIP WITH US IF THEY REACTED IN SUCH A FRENETIC AND AD-OLESCENT FASHION. MC AULIFFE HAD JUST COME FROM A SIX-DAY VISIT TO CHILE WHERE THE SAME THEMES WERE DISCUSSED IN GREAT DEPTH WITH CHILEAN MILITARY OFFICERS AT ALL LEVELS. DESPITE
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THE HEAT OF THE DISCUSSION AND THE STRONG POSITION TAKEN BY THE CHILEANS, AT NO TIME DID THEY RESORT TO THEATRICAL ACTS. BY COMPARISON THE URUGUAYANS LOOKED VERY BAD. RAVENNA APPEARED SHAKEN AND AGREED TO OFFER HIS APOLOGIES TO THE GENERAL, WHICH HE DID.

5. THE NEXT MORNING, GENERAL MC AULIFFE HELD A PRE-DEPARTURE PRESS CONFERENCE IN WHICH HE EMPHASIZED TWO POINTS: 1) U.S. MILITARY FORCES SUPPORTED THE HUMAN RIGHTS EMPHASIS OF THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION, AND 2) HIS DISCUSSIONS IN URUGUAY HAD FOCUSED ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE AND HAD BEEN FRANK AND HOPEFULLY, USEFUL. AT ONE POINT HE WAS ASKED WHETHER HE HAD MADE ANY "POLITICAL PROPOSAL" AT THE LUNCHEON THE DAY BEFORE. HE ANSWERED THAT HE HAD NOT, BUT THAT AT THE LUNCHEON BOTH HE AND THE URUGUAYAN MILITARY HAD FRANKLY AND OPENLY STATED THEIR VIEWS ON HUMAN RIGHTS.

6. THAT AFTERNOON THE PRO-GOVERNMENT TABLOID MUNDO COLOR CAME OUT WITH A STARTLING HEADLINE. IT READ, "PENTAGON ATTEMPTS TO TELL THE URUGUAYAN ARMED FORCES THE DIRECTION IT SHOULD TAKE." THE ARTICLE WHICH FOLLOWED DREW HEAVILY FROM THE PRESS CONFERENCE BUT ALSO INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT: "WE UNDERSTAND THAT AT THE LUNCHEON HIGH MILITARY AUTHORITIES OFFERED FOR THE VISITING GENERAL MC AULIFFE AT THE NAVAL CLUB HE READ A STATEMENT WHICH NOTED THAT THE URUGUAYAN ARMED FORCES HAD TO FOLLOW A LINE OF ACTION ESTABLISHED BY THE PENTAGON WHICH HAS BEEN ADOPTED FOR THOSE COUNTRIES IN THE HEMISPHERE THAT MAINTAIN RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES." IN ANOTHER SECTION OF THE ARTICLE THEY NOTE THAT GENERAL MCAULIFFE WAS ASKED WHETHER HE HAD MADE CERTAIN "POLITICAL PROPOSALS" DURING THE LUNCHEON. MCAULIFFE WAS QUOTED CORRECTLY AS SAYING "YESTERDAY'S LUNCHEON OFFERED A MAGNIFICENT OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE CONTACT WITH THE URUGUAYAN MILITARY AUTHORITIES. DURING THE LUNCHEON
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WE DISCUSSED THE SUBJECT OF HUMAN RIGHTS. FOR MY PART I EXPLAINED THE POSITION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES AND THEY EXPRESSED THE POSITION OF THEIR OWN GOVERNMENT, BUT THERE WAS NO POLITICAL PROPOSAL."

7. I AM SENDING A COPY OF GENERAL MC AULIFFE'S
REMARKS TO ALL THE FLAG OFFICERS IN THE URUGUAYAN ARMED
FORCES TO ENSURE THAT THEY HAVE AN ACCURATE VERSION OF WHAT
HE SAID. I ALSO CALLED BRIG. PALADINI TO EXPRESS MY CONCERN
ABOUT THE ARTICLE IN MUNDO COLOR, WHICH HE HAD NOT YET SEEN,
AND ASKED THAT HE TAKE WHATEVER ACTION WAS NECESSARY TO PUBLISH
A CLARIFICATION BY THE ARMED FORCES. HE PROMISED TO LOOK INTO
THE MATTER. HE WAS CLEARLY SURPRISED AND EVIDENCED NO TOUCHNESS.
PEZZULLO

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